Laboratory Instrument Computer

Foreword

Rarely is there opportunity to trace in detail the steps and events leading to a development as significant to the scientific community as the emergence of the mini-personal computer. History, even as recent as twenty years ago, is usually clouded with uncertainty about facts, the distortion of memory, and the nuances of interpretation.

The following dramatic narrative recounts the development of the Laboratory Instrument Computer (LINC) from its conception in the Lincoln Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, through its evaluation in distinguished biomedical research laboratories, and along the way tells of its obvious influence on the growth of the Digital Equipment Corporation. The ubiquity of the "mini" and so called personal computer of today is substantial evidence of the importance of this development.

As one who was involved in related areas of research and technical development and now has responsibility for the administration of large health related programs, I find the LINC success story both satisfying and highly instructive. Two aspects of this interesting story are worth noting. The development of LINC was sparked not by the compelling defense or space program needs of the time, but by an intense interest in providing better mechanisms for conducting neurophysiological research. Further, the LINC saga provides a cogent example of what can be accomplished in partnership involving the government, academic institutions and industry.

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Laboratory Instrument Computer (LINC) from its conception in the Lincoln Laboratory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology